

President's Greetings

Taking your free book after working on the lobby books can result in amazing learning about things you might never otherwise know. Recently, we took a book called *Night Witches* about World War II women military aviators of the 588th Night Bomber Regiment of the Soviet Air Forces. I learned that the regiment was made up primarily of women volunteers in their late teens and early twenties. The following excerpted from their article in Wikipedia shows these aviators as truly astonishing.

*These young women flew harassment and precision bombing missions against the German military from 1942 until the end of the war. They flew over 23,000 missions, dropping over 3,000 tons of bombs and 26,000 incendiary shells. The regiment was the most highly decorated female unit in the Soviet Air Force, with many pilots flying over 800 missions by the end of the war. Thirty-two of these valiant pilots died in the war.

*The Night Witches flew in a special battle version of 1928-designed wood-and-canvas biplanes, originally intended for use as training aircraft and for crop dusting. The planes could carry only six bombs at a time, so the witches often flew eight or more missions per night. Although the aircraft were obsolete and slow, the pilots made daring use of their exceptional maneuverability. The planes flew at a lower maximum speed than the stall speed of the German's Messerschmitt Bf 109 and Focke-Wulf Fw 190. As a result, German pilots found them very difficult to shoot down with the exception of German fighter ace, Josef Kociok, who grounded the regiment for an entire night by shooting down four of its planes.

An attack technique of the night bomber Witches was to idle their engines near the target and glide to the bomb release point with only wind noise left to reveal their location. German soldiers likened the sound to broomsticks and named the pilots "Night Witches." Due to the weight of the bombs and the low altitude of flight, the pilots carried no parachutes until 1944.

Wow!

Florence Pritchard

Focus on Freedom

One of the most pleasant aspects of our Freedom Public Library is its atmosphere of courtesy, calm and order. A case can be made that the library functions as a space that can reduce stress and offer refuge from the sometimes challenging effects of contemporary life's complexities.

That the library can provide patrons with this kind of psychological support is not a matter of chance. In good part, it results from the kind of people who become library staff and their commitment to serve with kindness and care. Giving and helping are these professionals' core values.

The library's capacity to provide both restful and informative services is also due in good part to the library system's "maintenance" program. Throughout the year each of the branches hold "Maintenance Days" to bring staff up to date on library events, policies and news. Additionally, staff can discuss issues and concerns and ways to address them.

The next Maintenance Day for Freedom Public Library will take place on May 11 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. New staff including Ellie Goodwin, the new supervisor, will take some time to get to know each other and to learn about Freedom's history from long time staff. The Friends of Freedom Public Library have been invited to participate by sharing their mission and explaining how their work supports the library. To round out the day, the staff will actually do some maintenance work—cleaning workspaces, shelving and organizing books, restocking supplies.

All of this adds up to staff awareness of what is going on across the system, knowledge of resources available to them to better serve the public, and a continuing bright, cheerful yet serene library.

As Ellie Goodwin says, "It's a pretty full day, but it's all worthwhile!"



On the Horizon

Last month this column described plans for a new residential development on 865 acres of Winding Oaks Farm land. It's single-and multi-family homes will markedly increase the population in our Library service area. Now we learn that OTOW developer Ken Colen plans to build 2,500 homes *not* restricted to those who are 55 and older on the east side of SW 80th Avenue across from the Stone Creek entrance. Clearly, these plans are a spur to the Freedom Friends' community awareness initiative. We need to get our Friends' story out to the developments that now surround the library, to polish our message so that as new developments are built we can confidently convey our mission and work to their residents.

On April 18, Milli Costantini, JR Smith and I met to begin planning for reaching out to our community. We see the first step as documenting a Freedom Friends "story" that shows real examples of how our support to the Library changes lives and promotes core values. JR will create a sample video along these lines and will bring it to the June meeting where members will review it and suggest ways to strengthen it. Then we will take all ideas to a team at FiberVision who will make a professional video of our story.

At the same time we will be identifying home owners associations (HOA's) in our service area and arranging to introduce ourselves with our video, annual report and other appropriate materials at their meetings. We will ask each association to identify a resident who will serve as a "Beacon" to send information to us about library projects their residents would like to see us support and to receive communication from us about our ongoing work.

The result of these efforts will be a network that will strengthen the Friends and increase resources of the Freedom Public Library. Any Friend who would like to work on this project with us is most welcome!